

21 June 2019

Professor Euan Wallace AM

Panel Chair

Safer Care Victoria

Email: scvreview@safercare.vic.gov.au

Dear Professor Wallace,

Re: Review of Chiropractic Spinal Care for Children under 12 years

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) thanks Safer Care Victoria for the opportunity to provide comment on this very important issue. In the absence of any clinical evidence of benefit, the RACGP considers the practice of spinal manipulation for infants, to be irresponsible practice.

The international peer reviewed literature strongly indicates that the risks of chiropractic care to children and adolescents far outweighs any health benefits and that the evidence-base for chiropractic care for children and adolescents is scarce and of poor quality.^{1,2} A recent (2018) systematic review and meta-analysis reported the evidence of any significant benefit of spinal manipulation in infants to be low, due to the low quality of the reviewed studies.³

Whilst the incidence of adverse events through spinal manipulation in children cannot be reliably determined from observational studies, the possible harms are indeed serious, including subarachnoid hemorrhage, paraplegia, dislocations of cervical vertebrae, and death.⁴ Additionally, delays to diagnoses and treatments resulting from taking a course of manual therapy poses a serious risk.

In the interests of patient safety, the RACGP strongly recommends that the governance of the chiropractic profession be reviewed. The RACGP has previously communicated its concern to the Chiropractor's Association of Australia regarding the existing governance of standards and the scope of practice for chiropractors.

The RACGP thanks Safer Care Victoria again for the opportunity to comment. If you have any further queries please contact Mr Stephan Groombridge, Manager, eHealth and Quality Care on (03) 8669-0544 or at stephan.groombridge@racgp.org.au

Yours sincerely



Dr Harry Nespolon

President

References

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2. Clar C, et al., *Clinical effectiveness of manual therapy for the management of musculoskeletal and nonmusculoskeletal conditions: systematic review and update of UK evidence report*. Chiropractic & Manual Therapies 2014. **22**: p. 12.
3. Carnes D, et al., *Manual therapy for unsettled, distressed and excessively crying infants: a systematic review and meta-analyses*. BMJ Open 2018. **8**:e019040.
4. Todd AJ, et al., *Adverse Events Due to Chiropractic and Other Manual Therapies for Infants and Children: A Review of the Literature*. J Manipulative Physiol Ther 2015. **38**(9): p. 669-712.